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FM AMEMBASSY VALLETTA  
TO RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE  
RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE  
RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1424

C O N F I D E N T I A L VALLETTA 000097

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DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/WE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/10/2018  
TAGS: [MT](#) [NATO](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PSI](#)  
SUBJECT: MALTA: RULING NATIONALIST PARTY WINS A NARROW  
VICTORY

REF: A. VALLETTA 00044

[1](#)B. VALLETTA 00048

Classified By: PolOff MCummings for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (U) The ruling Nationalist Party (NP), led by Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi, won the March 8 general elections with a slim margin of 1,200 votes, which amounted to just 0.4 percent of the votes cast, over the Malta Labor Party (MLP). Though it's clear that the Nationalists will remain in power with their third consecutive win over Labor, due to the complicated nature of the single transferable vote system (Reftel A), the new slate of Members of Parliament (MPs) has not yet been announced. However, it is clear that no third party was elected to Parliament.

[1](#)2. (U) In the wake of Labor's defeat, on March 10, Alfred Sant, MLP leader since 1992, announced that he was stepping down. Alfred Sant was briefly Prime Minister from 1996-1998, the only two years since 1987 in which the Nationalists were not in government.

[1](#)3. (U) The relatively low turnout, which at 93.3 percent was the lowest since 1971, was thought to favor the MLP, whose supporters started celebrating immediately after the polls closed, but as the votes were counted on Sunday, March 9, the margins were too close to call; and in the final result, neither party received an absolute majority, with NP getting 49.3 percent of the votes, the MLP with 48.9 percent, and the Green Party (AD) eked out 1.8 percent of the votes. NP General Secretary Joe Saliba declared victory after the counting was complete. The country is split down the middle along party lines, around 10,000 swing voters, who generally favored the Nationalists since 1998, decide the election.

[1](#)4. (C) With the re-election of the NP and PM Gonzi, post expects a continuation of the excellent and productive working relationship we've enjoyed that resulted in a PSI-Ship Boarding Agreement, which entered into force in December 2007, and agreement on the technical points for a Double Taxation Agreement (DTA), which could be signed in the coming months. Gonzi has also expressed a willingness to support multilateral security efforts. As reported Reftel B, Gonzi told the Ambassador that if re-elected Malta would rejoin NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP).  
BORDONARO